

## Interview with Margaret V. Taylor

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MARGARET V. TAYLOR

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*Q: This is Lew Schmidt interviewing Margaret Taylor at her home in Tiburon, California, on March 28, 1990. Margaret, I would like to have you start off by giving a brief statement of your background, your educational experiences and any activities that you may have undertaken before you went into the Information and Cultural Program. If you did not have anything before that, that is all right too, but if you did, I would like just a brief background there and also how you got into the work in the first place.*

From then on, we will take it by assignment chronologically, and we will cover various aspects as we talked about before I turned the machine on. So will you start now with your brief background and tell me how things went.

Biosketch

TAYLOR: I was born in San Diego and went through school there, including getting an undergraduate degree at San Diego State University. And then my first really significant job, which was insignificant because of my age and experience, was to go back to Boston and work for the Christian Science Monitor in rather lowly jobs but it gave me that

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newspaper background and experience and outlook which then was of interest to the formulating USIA activity.

### 1951 Induction in to IIA, Predecessor to USIA

After I had worked for the Monitor for a couple of years, I developed a great interest in international events and in being able to travel but, unfortunately, did not have a salary that enabled me to go much further than the state of Maine. So I sent off an application to the predecessor of USIA as a kind of lark, and within the course of the months that it took for them to process my application and to do the necessary security check and so on, I finally was inducted into the agency in 1951.

### Later 1951: Salonika, Greece

I went through a little training program and then my first assignment was to Salonika, Greece. So off I went and enjoyed the experience thoroughly. I was working with what was then the policy of the agency to mass-distribute films — that is to have a mobile unit with film showings around northern Greece — and I was doing some work in other areas of the agency's activities. There were only three Americans at that small branch post. So I got involved in other things as well.

*Q: May I ask you what your official title was? What position you were holding within the USIS in Greece?*

TAYLOR: Well, I was sent out as a secretary, but there was relatively little to do in that capacity so I was, in effect, a trainee and the PAO then seemed to be more interested in having somebody who could operate in the various media of USIA.

*Q: Who was your PAO at the time?*

TAYLOR: Albert Miller, a very capable, nice man whom I really enjoyed. He was active and interested; unfortunately for the service, he didn't stay with it. He just completed that

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tour and then decided to go back to the United States and settle down. I'm still in touch with him and value that relationship very much.

But the Consul in Salonika also was very interested in the work of the Information Service and so he and Bert Miller worked together in trying to really reach out to the northern Greek people and to keep activities going that would reach and influence them.

This was the period when that sort of mass contact was more prevalent than the more specialized contact that came later on. But while I was there, we began getting U.S. Naval visits for the first time since World War II. And so there was a lot of activity with the ships, getting people on to the ships for visits and trying to arrange contact between the ship's officers and the local people, ship visits, PR events, and so I was involved in that also.

We had a small library and I did a certain amount of traveling throughout northern Greece, helping to set up little reading rooms and working with an English teaching specialist who came up from Athens, trying to encourage the study of English throughout Northern Greece, and working with the school system.

*Q: What did you feel was the attitude of the Greek people towards the United States at that time? Did you encounter any anti-American feeling among the Greeks or how did you read it?*

TAYLOR: I didn't experience any anti-American feeling. The Greeks have vast contact with the United States through so many Greek people who've come to this country to settle, and there was a great reaching out to the United States. It was still a very difficult period in Greece because they had been badly devastated by World War II. The German bombing of Greece created a lot of devastation. The aid that was being used from the United States to help rebuild countries and the contacts, as I say, through family relationships, left a very supportive and friendly relationship with Americans.

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It was a nice time to be there in terms of simply going into essentially hospitable environments and feeling that we were able to provide some element of help to the people who were really struggling. The people were poor. But the Greeks are very outgoing, so they enjoy getting to know people, including Americans and other foreigners.

*Q: So I suppose that the main thrust of your program then at that time was primarily a program of giving the Greeks information about the United States and stressing the friendship between the countries? Is that a correct assumption?*

TAYLOR: Yes, that is the correct assumption. The Agency was still developing its policies and becoming more focused, but at that time, there was great emphasis put on materials about the United States: the movies, the documentary films that we showed, books in the libraries were about America in its various aspects. We also worked with newspapers in northern Greece to disseminate information about the United States.

But, also it was a time when relationships were important, in effect, simply showing the American flag.

*Q: That was also the period, 1951-1953, when we were subjected to a great deal of the McCarthy harassment. I suppose being in Salonika you did not get directly attacked by the Cohn and Schine clowns as they came around? I know they visited Greece, but did they impinge, at all, upon your program?*

TAYLOR: Well, they certainly did. We were shielded, of course, because northern Greece seemed a long way away from Athens. We did, of course, get to Athens for meetings and people came to visit us occasionally, but Salonika — it was a backwater. However, Cohn did manage a trip to Salonika and looked around, which was characteristically unpleasant. We also heard about their activities in Athens and had a very firm impression of how unpopular they were with the Embassy.

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I don't have a clear recollection of how much the Greek people were affected by this. I suppose those who were more sophisticated and knew something about the Washington scene were aware of it, but I think the Cohn/Schine episode was probably mostly confined to the Americans there.

*Q: Yes, I think except for whatever stories may have appeared in the press, the Cohn and Schine group did not impinge much on the populations; they were after the professionals in the Agency program. Of course, at that time, you were still a part of State, the information and education operation which was then within the Public Affairs Bureau of the State Department?*

1953: IIA Separates from DepState; Taylor Goes to Tel Aviv

TAYLOR: Right. Then, in 1953, there was the separation between State and the Information Service, the latter becoming an independent agency. Because of my lack of tenure and inexperience, I was "RIFed." So my career appeared to be coming to an abrupt halt, and I made preparations to return to the United States.

I got as far as the airport in Athens where I was greeted by a USIS officer with a telegram from Washington that said, in effect, "Dear Ms. Taylor, you're going to Tel Aviv. So I, more or less, turned on my heel and went off to Tel Aviv. While I had very little tenure and experience, apparently someone else had even less, so I went to Tel Aviv where I served just for six months, completing that original two-year assignment.

*Q: What month was this in 1953?*

TAYLOR: Well, let's see, I left Tel Aviv along about May, 1954, and I was there for six months, so it was in the fall of 1953 when I went down there. I was there for a very short time but long enough to get a feel for that country and to gain more work experience.

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When I went to Tel Aviv, I was cast more into the role of a secretary, and therefore my activities, in that sense, were much more curtailed. But, there was a wonderful CAO, Tom McGrail, who had come to Tel Aviv about the same time I did, from Japan, where he had spent many years, first with the Army and then he joined the Information Service, and was assigned back to Japan. His next assignment was in Tel Aviv.

He encouraged my interest in cultural work. He was himself a very knowledgeable and enthusiastic representative of American culture.

He had, I think, made quite an impression on the Japanese when he was there, from the stories that I heard him tell, and because he was a bachelor, (a good bit older than I, but since he was a bachelor) we often went to concerts together and to art shows, et cetera, and so I was able to associate with that group of people in Israel and through my own natural interests. It was a haven for me.

This was a period in Israeli history when the Israelis were really trying to reach out, particularly to Americans, but also to all Westerners, because they had great enthusiasm about the formulation of that country and really wanted to meet as many foreigners as they could and give them a good impression of Israel. It was a matter of give and take. We brought with us our knowledge and representation of the United States and, of course, Tom was working with cultural programs, and the Israelis, then, were eager to invite us into their homes. So we had that kind of natural entree into the country through the people. It was a most interesting and pleasant way of establishing contact.

*Q: Your program then, in Israel, was in many respects, I gather, similar to that which you were carrying on in Greece? Since you were dealing with a largely pro- American audience, it was more or less information about the U.S. and cultivating the friendships of the Israelis?*

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TAYLOR: Yes. Very much so. And we did travel throughout the country, visited kibbutzim, and went to the other towns: to Haifa and the part of Jerusalem that one could visit then. It was just what you indicate.

*Q: Did you have a motion picture program there that went out into the field, or did you not?*

TAYLOR: I'm a little hazy about that. There was a small motion picture program but I was not as directly involved in it and, of course, the population was very much smaller so I'm not sure that — the program certainly wasn't as big as it was in northern Greece. However, I really don't recall how much of a program it was.

*Q: And who was head of the USIS program at that time?*

TAYLOR: Wilfred Cramer. And then there was Tom McGrail, the Cultural Officer, and a radio/press officer.

*Q: I suppose they were able to place a good deal of information both on the radio in Israel and also in the newspapers?*

TAYLOR: Yes, because there was an easy acceptance of information and, so I don't think that there was any great problem about getting our materials placed. There were problems of moving around on Saturday because everything closed down in Israel on Saturdays, but that was not a terrible impediment.

*Q: Was there any particular program emphasis that you could determine? Did you have an exchange program at that time with the U.S.?*

TAYLOR: Yes, there was an exchange program but here again, having been there for this relatively short period of time, I don't remember the size of it. But we did have an exchange program and had all of the facilities of the Service and an ambassador who was kindly

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disposed toward USIS, so I think people were aware of what we were trying to do and there was support for the activity.

*Q: Who was the ambassador then?*

TAYLOR: Francis Russell, a fine career person. It was a most worthwhile, albeit very brief, experience.

1954: Medan, on Sumatra in Indonesia

*Q: So then, after you finished your tour in Tel Aviv where did you go following that assignment?*

TAYLOR: I was assigned to Medan, Indonesia as a Public Affairs trainee. In Medan, I was given responsibility for running the library. I worked on exchange programs and really got a basis in cultural work there that was valuable to me during the rest of my career.

Indonesia was still emerging — developing as a republic after having won independence from the Dutch after World War II. It was an area of low education, so there were vast numbers of people who were illiterate. Our program focus had to be on the educated, of course, as it had become evident USIS programs could not realistically reach broad masses, particularly with communications in the country being under- developed.

Medan was the capital of North Sumatra in Indonesia, and while a fairly large town in population, it was a real backwater. I think it had about one million people but Indonesia was, at that time, very much a Third World country and Medan was really off the beaten track. It was a town that really only had one main street going through it — one main business street that is — and the rest of it was pretty hit- and-miss in terms of businesses, stores and offices. But it was a very good place for me to get the kind of broad experience that I needed in to underpin my own career.

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One of my activities, a kind of developing one, was to hold some classes in the teaching of English as a Second Language, which was a wonderful entree to that area. There was great interest in learning English on the part of those who wanted to move away from the Dutch colonial past. We did have an active leader program, sending prominent people from Northern Sumatra to the United States for periods of observation and contact with their American colleagues. I worked on that program to help select them and to send them off to the United States with the necessary information about places and institutions that they might want to visit.

*Q: Had the Communist threat become very great in Indonesia yet, at that time, as it did later?*

TAYLOR: No, it had not. It was a period of very great hope and enthusiasm for developing an entirely new, independent nation. Sukarno, the president at that time, was a very charismatic figure. The people had rallied behind him because he brought them out of this period of colonial oppression. He was, at that time, truly a great leader of his people and really wanted to build the nation. He did not have to compromise with the Communist element, which was virtually unknown at that time.

*Q: Who was the country Public Affairs Officer at that time? It had been Willard Hanna in the very early 50s, but I know he had gone to Japan by that time — who was the PAO then?*

TAYLOR: It was Jack O'Brien who ran a very good show. We got lots of support from Jakarta. Jakarta was, of course, very far away, but transportation was pretty good. There were airplanes flying back and forth between Jakarta and Medan on a regular schedule, but all other facilities were somewhat less than adequate. Ships were infrequent and there was a terrible problem of pilferage, so anything that had to be shipped up to Medan from Jakarta might or might not arrive unless it could be packed into the pouch and sent up that way.

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We were at the end of the line, also in terms of people support from Jakarta because they were all busy with their own jobs there. So, we had to go down there for contact with the rest of the operation.

*Q: It was, I think, about that time that the original Conference of Unaligned Nations was held in Jakarta at Bandung. Were you in any way affected by that? Did you have any participation in that program?*

TAYLOR: Not directly. I was, of course, very much aware of it and it was a blockbuster event in Indonesia because this was their big foray into international events. And it was sort of a takeoff point for Sukarno and his megalomania. It was a very important conference and had important repercussions all throughout that area of the globe, but here again we were isolated from the main action because we were so far away in spirit and in distance. For the most part we could only read about it. I don't even recall a lot of discussion amongst Indonesians in Medan about the conference.

I was not working directly on press things, but our USIS Branch office did supply materials to the newspapers and to the radio station. We had no radio officer, and materials were supplied to us from Jakarta.

*Q: You mentioned that you had a library there. I presume that most of the books were in English and I wonder to what extent the Indonesians, at that time, were fluent enough in English or knowledgeable enough to read the books. What was your impression?*

TAYLOR: Well, of course it was a very much lesser operation, precisely because of this problem of fewer English speakers. Nonetheless, there were people who spoke English and were studying English so most of our attendance at the library were students. And we were trying to work with the schools in helping out with English teaching materials, insofar as we were able to get them.

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I was in Medan from 1954 to 1956, and this was really before the emphasis on direct English language training as a policy of the agency itself. But there was some beginning interest in it and we were able to order some materials and to work, to a limited degree, with English language students.

*Q: When we had the tape off for a minute or two, you mentioned the role of women in Indonesia and said that you might like to make a few comments about that. So, why don't you take off at this point and tell your story about the women's role in Indonesia?*

### Role of Women in Indonesia

TAYLOR: When I was in Medan we had a rather unique office in the sense that the PAO, at that time, was a woman, Myrtle Thorn, and since I was the only other American employee, we constituted an all female Branch office. Of course, we had our Indonesian staff most of whom were male, but it was, in a sense, a very important time to be working with Indonesian women.

As I mentioned before, Indonesian women were not as subjugated as they were in the more fiercely Moslem countries, the Arab countries. And while there was open discrimination (the men, for instance, could have four wives which the women didn't like very well) still they did not suffer the same degree of suppression as in Arab countries.

There were and are some very capable Indonesian women. They had been very important in the development of the country because everybody had to work, including the women. Many got into trading jobs through marketing, that is, they got started that way. Even when I was there there were some women who were running their own businesses but they were not in very many leadership positions.

In a sense, in North Sumatra, which was less sophisticated than Java certainly, Myrtle Thorn and I were kind of role models because we were two independent women associating with a fair number of Indonesian women. It was a very rewarding experience

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to be working with Indonesian women and to feel that we could benefit them in providing whatever degree of insight and support we could to help women raise their consciousness and self-esteem.

*Q: I seem to remember that there were women who managed to get into positions of some prominence in the government. I do not remember what years these were, but one in particular that I recall, was actually a representative of Indonesia in one or another of the international organizations in Geneva. I'm sure she probably came from Java and you may not have been in the country at that time; does that raise any thoughts?*

TAYLOR: Well, yes, it does in a general way. As I said, Indonesian women were never as subjugated as they were in some of the other Moslem countries, and I think they had enough power — there were women's organizations that had enough power — that they could bring some influence on the government. I remember when I was later assigned to Jakarta, that one of my chief assistants, an Indonesian woman, had been Cultural Officer at her embassy in Great Britain. And so there certainly were Indonesian women who were assigned to some positions of authority. In the early stages, it was not, by any means, a large number, but there were some very capable and influential women.

*Q: Was there any requirement, in Indonesia, that the women dress as they did in some of the other, more fundamentalist Islamic countries, such as wearing the chador and so forth?*

TAYLOR: There are pockets of Moslem fundamentalism in Indonesia. The women in those communities wore headdresses but not the full length chador nor veiling of the face. I don't believe that Indonesian women had ever had to cover their faces. And even today, there are some women who prefer, because of tradition, to wear a head covering. But most women are free to choose their own form of dress and to follow the fashions of other Indonesian women.

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A number of women wear western dress, but for formal occasions particularly, they chose to wear their lovely sarongs and a blouse which is called a badju. And so it was always a pleasure to go to parties and see the Indonesian women in their native costume, if you want to call it that.

*Q: Did you notice any resentment among the men because of the more or less liberated status of the women in Indonesia, or had that been sufficiently ongoing so that there was not any indication of resentment among the men?*

TAYLOR: Well, alas, I think there is always that element. Men will be men and women will be women. So, there was some of that, but I don't think that it was a serious problem. It was not as overt perhaps as in other countries.

*Q: I gather that you and Myrtle Thorn did not attempt any particular programs, aimed specifically at women, that would have encouraged any more liberalization of their status such as what was carried on in Japan, for example, during the Occupation?*

TAYLOR: Well, we didn't carry on programs but we, both of us, were interested in women's groups and tried to engage in their activities as much as we could, and to work through personal contact, supplying whatever we could in the way of information about women's activities in the United States. We were even able to get some women leaders on to the leader program and send them to the United States and to choose some women students to send to the United States. Unfortunately, the vast majority of exchangees were men, so in a sense it was tokenism, but it was something that we were well aware of in northern Sumatra. There was also a relatively receptive attitude at headquarters in Jakarta to the selection of some women in exchange programs.

### Animistic Influences in Indonesian Religious Practices

*Q: Did you find that there were underlying animistic practices from ancient religions in Sumatra and, to the extent that you had experience elsewhere in Indonesia, was that true*

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*there, too? Because I have noted in Indonesia many indications of animism. Certainly the shadow plays are based on some of the mythology of India.*

TAYLOR: Yes, that's very true. I think it's true of most developing or Third World countries that the practices of the past carry forward into any new religion that comes along. The big waves of religion — the introduction of new religions in Indonesia came with the traders, coming from first, Hinduism, which swept the country, then Buddhism and then Islam coming with Arab traders.

Because of the nature of the country, situated as it is on so many islands over a broad sweep of area; and with the lack of communication, even today, with some of the outlying areas and villages deep in the interior of these huge islands, no new religions have penetrated those places and so their outright native religions include lots of animism and native practices. But even though Indonesia is about 90% or more Moslem, there is still an underpinning of animist superstitions, if you will, left over.

The Function of the Wayang (Shadow Puppet Plays) in Indonesia and the Use the Government Makes of Them

As for the Wayang, the puppet plays, which are based on the Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabarata, these are the underlying stories of the Wayang. However, the Wayang in Indonesia became very much an Indonesian art form, and has been very important in the development of the whole nation because it was a kind of unifying factor throughout all these islands. And because it goes on all night long, there is a lot of material that can be presented. One person voices all these different characters in the Wayang during the evening's presentation. Over the years these speakers (dalang) have introduced many contemporary subjects into the dialogue between the stories. This is an integral part of the Wayang now, and the Indonesian government has used that as a means of introducing issues that they want to have discussed and communicated to their people.

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But we have not tried to influence those plays at all, of course. It would have been a very unwise practice to try to do so because they're basically religious in the sense that this has helped develop the character of the Indonesian people.

*Q: Well, you have answered the question I was about to ask. Because I know that in other parts of the world we have sometimes tried to develop themes through the native singers or players, travelings theatrical groups going throughout the country but as you say we did not attempt that in Indonesia.*

TAYLOR: Well, the constitution of the Indonesian nation written in 1946-47, specifies religious freedom and they do practice that fervently. However, because the country is primarily Moslem, about 90-93% [the high percentage of Moslem faith is probably true for most of Indonesia, except for Bali, which practices almost universally an adapted form of Hinduism substantially underlaid with animistic beliefs] there is an inevitable bias there just by numbers and popular appeal. There are elements of fundamentalist Islam throughout Indonesia and they watch carefully for any possible infiltration of their doctrine. One would have to tread very, very adroitly to make sure that they are not trying to influence the religion. 1956: Washington: Educational Exchange Activities in State

*Q: Your next assignment was Washington, I think.*

TAYLOR: Yes,, I was then assigned to Washington, and because of my interest in cultural work, I was placed in the International Educational Exchange Service of the State Department. While the U.S. Information Agency had been established on August 1, 1953, cultural and exchange programs were left under the direction of State. To benefit from the hands-on experience of USIA Cultural Officers abroad, some of us were "loaned" to State for Washington assignments.

My specific responsibility was orientation programs and materials, mostly for Americans going to foreign countries, but also to some degree for exchangees coming to the U.S. I

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tried to develop materials that would help the Americans to become more effective and to settle into their foreign environment more easily and to recommend basic orientation programs and lectures.

*Q: Were these instructional and orientation materials handled through the Foreign Service Institute or hadn't the Institute been established yet in its present form?*

TAYLOR: The Institute was functioning but had not developed as broad a range of courses and studies as it has today. At that time, it was primarily for employees of the State Department, domestic and foreign service. There was no specific content for USIA, although we were certainly included as foreign service employees, and benefitted enormously from area studies and the cross-cultural lectures. 1960: Japan. In Charge of Leader and Specialist Exchange Program

*Q: So you went to Japan from there, and what position did you hold in Japan, and can you tell us a bit about the programming while you were there?*

TAYLOR: I went to Japan in January of 1960, where my first experience was to sit practically the day after arrival in Tokyo for the examination, which was one of the first steps in the Agency's career status accreditation. However, having survived that, I then was able to devote myself to my job, which was as exchanges officer, specifically working on the Leader and Specialist Program still under the operation of the State Department, although I was housed in the USIS offices in Japan.

*Q: Now, let me ask you at this point, when I was in Japan, some years earlier, USIS had a completely separate section on the Educational and International Exchange Program. Was that still in place when you were in Japan and did you therefore cover a segment of that program? If so, who was the overall Educational Exchange Officer or were you in that position?*

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TAYLOR: No, I was part of a relatively large office. The head of the Exchange Program was Bob Boylan. There were four American officers and an American secretary just in that one section.

*Q: That's the way it was when I was there.*

TAYLOR: We were housed in the Mantetsu Biru, which was the only building left standing in that area after the World War II bombing. We were separate from the embassy proper, although close by. USIS had the top two floors of that decrepit building.

My specific responsibility was for the Leader and Specialist Program, both Japanese leaders and specialists going to the United States as well as American specialists coming to Japan to lecture before Japanese audiences in various fields, and in various disciplines.

I was very much aware of and to a limited degree involved in the Fulbright program and the other exchange activities of that office but almost my entire time was spent helping to select Japanese leaders going to the United States for periods of one or two months of observation and study. I also helped to program American specialists who came to Japan to lecture throughout the country on various aspects of American foreign policy, culture, economics, a broad range of American issues that we were trying to present to the Japanese.

It was quite a large program at that time because this was close enough to the war years that we still were trying to educate the Japanese both in terms of basic democracy as well as aiding them in coming out of their long period of isolation in the world and learning more about America.

I felt I had the best job in the embassy because this deeply involved me in Japanese society and I had an opportunity to get to know prominent Japanese whom we were sending to the United States. I had to discuss with them what they wanted to do in the United States, make suggestions and then send those messages forward to Washington

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so programs could be planned for them. On their return to Japan, I had find out what their impressions were and then to write that up and send it back to Washington.

It was a very interesting and I think extremely worthwhile program and provided an opportunity to cement in a very deep way relations between the United States and Japan.

*Q: Now, when you staged these lectures by American specialists, did you do a good deal of that through the cultural centers that USIS maintained throughout the country, or did you mix that with appearances at universities and other economic or political forums?*

TAYLOR: All of the above. We did work very closely with the rather large number of cultural centers in the country at that time. For a country the size of Japan, I think we had, maybe up to ten cultural centers.

*Q: You still had that many? We started out with 24 when we took over the program from the Army in 1952 and we gradually reduced them. I am interested to know you still had ten left.*

TAYLOR: I think it was about that number. I've forgotten exactly but it proved to be very difficult to close them because the Japanese clung to those centers. I think they were an very important part of their learning more about this strange phenomenon, the outside world. They had been so isolated throughout their own history that any information or outreach to foreign countries and to understanding foreign people was something that they both desired and felt that they could benefit from.

We worked through the cultural centers but we also planned lectures and meetings with American specialists' counterparts in Japanese society.

*Q: Who was the PAO at that time, was that the time when George Hellyer was there?*

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TAYLOR: William Copeland was PAO when I arrived in 1960, then George Hellyer. Hellyer was followed by Burton Fahs who came, I think, from the Ford Foundation.

*Q: No, I believe he came from the Rockefeller Foundation of which Dean Rusk had earlier been president. I think it was a combination of Secretary Rusk and Ambassador Reischauer that decided that he would be a fine man to go out there and take that position. He was one of the so-called "super-cultural officers" really, and after a while this Agency brought in Ed Nickel to handle direction of the standard operational side. Burton Fahs was then turned loose as a high level cultural man. But I do not know whether that had happened by the time you left or not?*

TAYLOR: It was happening, and Ed Nickel did come out while I was there. He was Deputy PAO and for precisely that reason, because Burton was not skilled in the administration of the program. He was more valuable in his high level contacts. He and his wife constituted a real pair. They were a team. She was very important in the work that he was doing.

Because of the special qualifications of Ambassador Reischauer and his Japanese-born wife, this was a period of very great receptivity and support throughout the embassy for the USIS operation. We all worked closely together. The Reischauers were extremely interested in the exchange program and were very helpful to me with these prominent Japanese who were going to the United States. I think they saw it as a very important element in the whole activity of the embassy.

*Q: It sounds strange now, but at the time that I left Japan, which was about four years before you got there, one of the largest U.S. programs was conducted by the AID mission and USIS supported their work on the Public Affairs side. Productivity was all the issue at that point because the Japanese were thought to need knowledge of our productivity methodology, which they did at that time. Was that still continuing when you were there or had that phased down?*

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TAYLOR: The AID program had phased down considerably and there were only a few people left. That function passed along into the economic section and we had a very effective economic officer, Phil Trezise.

*Q: Yes, he later became the U.S. Representative in the office of the OEC in Paris.*

TAYLOR: Yes. It seems an anomaly now that we were able to tell the Japanese about producing anything but, in fact, it was true then.

*Q: They still, I guess, had not exploded into the productive stage they have reached today.*

TAYLOR: Well, that economic miracle was gathering all this time. I left in August or September of 1963 when the Japanese were preparing for the 1964 World Olympics. It was the Games and all the activity developed around them, that were the watershed of Japan's emergence into the world economically. They were able to present almost flawless Olympics and the world became aware that Japan was poised and ready to do what they were embarked upon, which was to turn that country around economically and to make it important again.

*Q: You left before the Olympics was actually staged?*

TAYLOR: Yes, I did, and was sorry, of course. There was a lot of preparation prior to that so I was involved in some small part of that preparation. The Japanese have always had great trouble with English as we do with learning Japanese. It's an equal trade. But I remember traffic signs being put up in Tokyo saying in English such things as: "may parking and stopping" or "proceed to immediate inside left," which were largely incomprehensible. Somebody official thought that that was proper English so they printed them up on metal signs and set them around town.

*Q: Do you have any further comments on your Japanese experience before we pass to your next area of responsibility?*

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TAYLOR: Well, only to say, and this is a personal aside, but I think many of us who served in Japan have carried with us an abiding fascination for that country. It's a country which you never really get to know thoroughly.

There is a point with Japanese beyond which you simply can't get in terms of becoming familiar and really thinking that you thoroughly understand them. Because of Japan's importance now, I find that in my present day life there is a bond with the Japanese and with the Americans whom I knew in Japan which seems to surpass that of any other nation. I'm continually fascinated by Japan. We get so much in the papers and magazines and through all the media about Japan now and it's a matter of intense personal interest to me still.

*Q: Yes, I think all of us who have served in Japan as you and I did, (myself over three different periods of time) still have that feeling about the country. It is a fascinating nation and they are a remarkable people. 1963: Return to U.S. Time Out for a Year of Study at Stanford*

Well, since you feel that you have pretty well covered your Japanese experience, what did you do after that, Margaret?

TAYLOR: After Japan, I decided to come back to the United States and do some graduate study at Stanford. I was able to go through their accelerated trimester system and do a Masters in Communications.

*Q: Did you go on your own or did you manage to get an Agency assignment?*

TAYLOR: Well, alas, at that time, there weren't very many awards being given to women officers. I had a personal need to be in the U.S. because of my mother, who needed a little help at that time. So I decided to combine the degree period with helping her out a little bit. And so I got a Master's at that time.

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*Q: Did you take a leave without pay then?*

TAYLOR: I took a leave without pay.

1964: Assignment to Finland. Exchanges Officer

And from there, I was assigned to Finland, arriving there in about August or September of 1964. I was Exchanges Officer and, despite the fact that it's a very small country — population-wise only about 4 # million — they had a very large exchange program because Finland had been the only country in the world to pay off its post World War I debt to the U.S. The U.S. Congress, in appreciation for their honesty, decided to turn all of that money over to an educational exchange program. And then, in order not to penalize them, they also got a Fulbright program. So they had the full range of Fulbright and leader and specialist programs plus these additional monies accruing from the accumulation of this debt payment.

It was a very challenging job because I was solely responsible for it. I worked under a cultural officer but she, Tess Mravintz was focused entirely on the aspects of cultural programming. I worked with Finnish/American boards of directors, one for this Finnish debt program and a Fulbright board of directors responsible for the Fulbright program. In addition, I also helped to select and send off to the United States our parade of Finnish leaders going to the United States, and to help program the American lecturers who were coming to Finland under the regular American specialist program. It was very rewarding. The Finns initially are a very reserved people and it seems you have to be there for a while before you really can be accepted and get to know them. But then those contacts are very rewarding because they have a loyalty and a sincerity that makes for a significant relationship with the Finnish people.

*Q: Who was the PAO at that time?*

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TAYLOR: The PAO was Steve Sestanovich. The other officers there were excellent. Jim Mays was press officer, a very hard-working, capable person, and Tess Mravintz was a very talented, hard-working cultural officer. We also had a couple of different press officers and an American secretary. But that was the extent of the staff there.

Our offices were right across the street from the Saarinen Railroad Station which was always an inspiration to look out on.

*Q: You were separate from the embassy?*

TAYLOR: Yes. Our offices were right downtown so it was much more convenient. We had our library there which Tess supervised and we had our lecture programs in the library so it was a good place for a USIS office.

The success of the exchange program is shown in the statistics that were then pertinent. Of the number of university professors in Finnish universities, one-third of them had been trained in American universities.

*Q: Now, these are Finnish professors in the Finnish universities who were trained in the United States?*

TAYLOR: Yes. Finland, at that time, was very much under the eye of the Soviet Union. It was that part of a buffer state that had not been taken into the Soviet Union as were Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It was a showcase for the Soviets to point to and say well, we didn't take in Finland, with which we're living peaceably.

*Q: — except that they did steal Karelia?*

TAYLOR: They stole Karelia, a huge big piece of land along an 800-mile border. Finns who did not want to live under Russian rule for understandable reasons were all displaced.

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The Finns were very much more in tune with the western world than with the Soviet Union, in terms of their democratic institutions, their whole attitude of freedom for the individual, and so on. So, the climate there also was a very favorable one for our USIS work, and we got a good turnout at all of our activities: for lectures by Americans, for film showings that we had at the library facility, for using press releases and working with the press. It was a happy climate to live in but also very satisfying personally because we all felt that we were helping them to keep their contact with the western nations. The Finns were suffering from a terrible rate of inflation because after the war they had to pay reparations to the Soviet Union and it was an enormous economic burden for them. But, as they had done with the U.S. loan after World War I, they simply set themselves to the task and went ahead and paid those reparations but at great economic cost to their own country. The Finns are a very admirable people. Despite the cold climate — and I happen not to like cold weather — there was a real feeling of warmth and of common interest. So that was really a very, very nice period indeed. 1966: Back in Washington at the Cultural Bureau (CU) in DepState

And then from there I went back to Washington for a period of some years and worked at the State Department in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Because of my experience in Finland, I was at that time assigned to the European Section of CU and worked on the Scandinavian programs.

1972: Second Tour in Indonesia. Binational Center Director

In 1972, I was reassigned to Indonesia, but to Jakarta this time as director of the binational center in Jakarta. This turned out to be a very challenging job, because it was just at this time that USIS decided that the binational center should become self-supporting. However, in the Indonesian economic climate — the lower economic grouping of nations — people simply didn't have the money to operate without a subsidy from other sources.

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We had a large English teaching school at the center which was supervised by an English-as-a-second-language specialist, Bob Brown, so my — I was relieved of much of that detail, but trying to run the rest of the center was a challenge. The Center had a relatively large library, a whole program of lectures, art shows, lectures by American specialists on various subjects, musical presentations and a resident choir, (mostly Indonesian with a few American voices).

### Problems of Buying Property For and Constructing a New Binational Center Building

It was decided that we had to move into new quarters in order to make it a viable institution economically and there was pressure to accept American speakers at the center who were not as attractive to the binational board of directors as to the USIA scheme of things. So, while I was responsible to the agency for my work, I was also trying to work through the board to do what the agency wanted me to do.

In order to build a new building, we had to find property. The Indonesians were struggling to survive economically and, as many peoples in that economic category do, they were not as careful about corruption and payments under the table as they might have been. So it was very difficult to find a piece of property for legal sale, and then to try and raise the money to buy it and build a new center.

USIS promised some assistance but most of it had to come from a local fund-raising effort. I had proceeded on the basis of estimates from a Bank of America member of our Board, an American who felt that he could raise from the business community adequate funding to go ahead, buy the property, and build. But, in fact, just before we started paying for the property, that promise of monies fell apart and we found ourselves scraping bottom trying to raise money to pay for all of this. Plans lurched forward, sort of stop and start. We had eventually found property near the university, which seemed to be a very good location, but we had a little trouble with the then Chairman of the Board who it turned out was

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accepting payments under the table (the Indonesian director), so it was a very challenging and in some ways frustrating experience.

Nonetheless, at the end of that period of time, we had pretty well gotten the land issue settled and had blueprints drawn up for the building. Then I was reassigned in 1975 and my Deputy Director, Bob Brown, became Director, and proceeded with the building program. The center moved several years later into this new facility.

We had — we were fortunate there to have good PAOs, Alex Klieforth was PAO first and then Bernie Lavin, both very warm, sympathetic, intelligent people, and by and large, a very good American staff. My Indonesian staff was very uneven because it was hard to get educated people who were sophisticated enough to work knowledgeably on the things that we were involved in.

But, by and large, the Center constituted a kind of Indonesian family. The Indonesians are a very family oriented people and so both Bob and I felt that we were working together with them to try and pull off this big change in the whole operation of the center.

Binational Center's English Language Instruction Has Been a Significant Factor in Building a Population Capable in English Now Employed by Indonesians-Based Foreign Companies

I understand now from communications that I get occasionally from the center that it's running pretty well and they're now almost entirely separate from the USIS operation. They do receive some materials and I think they still are receiving some help in terms of getting American speakers, but it's more largely an Indonesian institution. The English language program continued to be successful. It was acknowledged, even while I was there, to be a prime center for the training of Indonesians in the English language.

At the present time, Indonesia is the focus of western and American business. There is a large population of now mostly literate and semi-skilled workers, but still with relatively

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low salaries, so a lot of American business is going there to do the kind of factory work that used to be done in Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Malaysia. Those English-speaking Indonesians are an important part of the present Indonesian economic climate. 1975: Back to a Third Assignment in DepState's Cultural Bureau; Then, in 1978, to Burma as Director of American Cultural Center, Rangoon

*Q: So, where did you go next?*

TAYLOR: From Indonesia in '75 I went back to Washington again as Chief of the Southeast Asian cultural programs at the Department of State in CU. I stayed there from '75 to 1978 and went back to the agency when CU was absorbed by the agency, but just for a very short period of time. Within a few months, I was transferred in 1978 to Rangoon, Burma, as Cultural Affairs Officer. My job there was as Director of the American Cultural Center in Rangoon.

*Q: Was that separate from the library which had been closed down at some point during recent years?*

TAYLOR: We had a library at the USIS office. Burma was at that time and still is strictly neutral and socialist, and USIS activities were restricted. Nonetheless, by the time I got there in 1978, things had improved from a prior, more restrictive atmosphere, so that people felt a little more free to come to our programs at the cultural center which was separate from the USIS office and the embassy but not far away.

*Q: Was there any library function at the cultural center or was it at USIS?*

TAYLOR: Yes, it was entirely at USIS.

*Q: Because I know that at one point, I do not remember just when it was, the Burmese government closed out the USIS library and said it had to stop operations. The librarian*

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*who had built that up library over a 30-year period had to leave the country. She was devastated. I do not remember just what year that was.*

TAYLOR: Well, I've forgotten what year that was too, but she was well-remembered and well loved. Her reputation exists to this day, I'm sure. It was on the basis of her work, I'm sure, that a library operation was approved again. By the time I got there, it was a library of about 10,000 volumes, so it had built up to a fairly substantial level.

*Q: Was there a fairly sizable office then, in Burma?*

In the Very Restrictive Atmosphere of Rangoon, USIS Film Program was one Activity that was Reasonably Free and Drew Significant Attendees

TAYLOR: We had a large Burmese staff but only three American officers. I had dual responsibility both for the cultural center, just a couple of blocks down the street from USIS, and for the library and regular exchange programs and so on; it kept me busy. The program that was most successful at the center was showing old American films. All films were reviewed by the Burmese government. The Burmese, because they had so little other entertainment in the country, loved to come to our films. We kept a guest list of the very most influential people in Rangoon society, so the film program really did have quite an impact. Members of the Socialist Party and the very top government officials might not come to our programs but somewhat lesser ranking officials and those who really wanted to maintain some sense of individuality did come with great pleasure and interest.

In fact, one of my problems was to eliminate people from the list from time to time because we had limited seating. Those who lost their positions in the government or their prominence didn't want to be taken off the list because they so enjoyed coming to the movies. It was a sticky problem.

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Our lectures were, considering the political climate, fairly well-attended. But it was ever so much more difficult to get a group to come out for lectures by Americans on subjects that might not be of immediate interest than to be entertained at the movies.

I was nonpolitical as Cultural Officer so I had no trouble inviting Burmese to my home for dinner, whereas, the political and sometimes the economic officers at the embassy did. And so I had a wider range of contacts than embassy officers enjoyed.

*Q: Were you permitted or did you try to sneak in an occasional political or economic officer from the Embassy on your guest list?*

TAYLOR: Yes, and that was perfectly acceptable as long as the Burmese could tell, whomever they had to tell, that they were going to an American household for dinner and it was the cultural officer. They didn't ask for the guest list, so that worked out pretty well. People came quite readily and seemed to appreciate the opportunity. I was able to run through quite a guest list over the almost two years I was there.

We also had at the center photographic and art exhibits, occasionally a concert or recital by a visiting American, and lectures by the American specialists.

### Tight Burmese Government Restrictions Made Exchange Program Difficult

The exchange program was exceedingly difficult to work with because Washington wanted me to tell them in advance, in other words under a budgetary procedure, the kinds of people who we were going to be sending. It was impossible in Burma to work that way. The Burmese had their own ideas of who could be allowed out of the country and whom they wanted to send. While we had friendly relations and I had an excellent, well-connected Burmese man working with me and the Burmese government, doing as much as he could to ferret out information, what the Burmese government wanted and what we felt we could support, it was like pulling teeth to get these interests together sometimes. It

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just required that extra attention and that patient, patient working with people. and Then all of a sudden, something would fall in place and we'd be able to get people off on their way.

We had a few students coming over. The Burmese, the government, was deathly afraid of people skipping across the border or going abroad and not bothering to come back because so many people wanted to flee that oppressive regime. When somebody was finally given permission to leave the country, that person could not bring his or her family with them to ensure that they returned to the country.

Sometimes we'd get somebody all lined up to travel under our program, and he or she would get to the final stage of getting a passport and the passport would not be granted, thus ending the endeavor. That was the kind of thing that you worked with all the time.

I remember one time we had an American speaker in the political science field coming to Rangoon to speak for us and we decided to gamble and have a dinner party with representatives of the Socialist Party at the Ambassador's house. The Ambassador was Maurice Bean. We sent out invitations and you always had to check back on the day that an event was to take place to determine whether people really did intend to come. The answer given was yes. It was a small dinner party, about a dozen people, so that the Socialist Party members could really talk to our American guest. We had high hopes of success.

The PAO, Frank Scotton and I, the Ambassador and the American guest were to be the only Americans there and we had invited maybe eight Burmese to come for dinner. We Americans showed up at the Ambassador's home and waited for the Burmese guests to arrive. By the time — let's see, I've forgotten the timing but we must have waited for an hour and a half or even two for them to arrive and they never showed up. So we sat down and had a solitary dinner party in the midst of this table all laid out for a bigger party.

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But that was the sort of thing that was apt to happen and so you just had to work along with it. Even at that, times were much better when I was there than they had been in previous years.

But ultimately it was rewarding working with the Burmese, not the government but the Burmese people did respond to our overtures. They were grateful to have the help and activities we could offer, something to try and support them in their everyday work and lives. I have very little communication with Burma now. People just do not write letters and stories in the newspapers are very few and far between, but from what I do find in the news, things are much worse than they were when I was there.

*Q: Yes, I think they are because Ne Win opened up and said he was resigning but actually he put one of his cronies in who is even more bloodthirsty and oppressive than he and so things are not very good now.*

TAYLOR: He has always remained the power behind the throne. He gave up the title but he by no means gave up the power.

Even more fundamentally, Burma has large problems, there is no doubt about that. But they always have been a rice exporter. In fact, some years ago they were the biggest rice exporter in East Asia. Now, because of inefficiency and other problems, I understand they really don't have enough rice to feed their own people.

*Q: No they do not. That is a sad situation.*

Ms. Taylor Explains Her Reasons for Retiring Early

TAYLOR: So, that was my last posting and I came back to the United States and decided to settle down where I am.

*Q: So you retired a little before you had to, I gather?*

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TAYLOR: Yes, I did. And I felt, for my own reasons, that it was necessary.

*Q: I would like you to say a few words about why you retired early, Margaret?*

TAYLOR: Well, one of my reasons was a real disappointment in the way successive administrations in the U.S. government have really, what I consider, disregarded the potential or the demonstrated success of the USIS operation. I really don't think they give it the importance that it should have and I think this is reflected in the fact that they have not been careful in their selection of directors of the agency. The caliber and qualifications of these Directors have not been high. We have suffered from a lack of direction and imagination.

So I really hope that the value of the Information Agency will be acknowledged in future years and that we can get people who are more skilled in the whole area of what we're supposed to be doing — more knowledgeable in foreign policy issues and of how USIS can address those issues.

*Q: I agree with you. I think that we have been slighted by several successive administrations, being given directors who really are competent neither in the Information or Cultural fields nor knowledgeable in foreign affairs. It is a reflection of the lack of respect, I think, that we get from the administrations. It has hurt the agency very greatly. I feel much as you do about the whole thing.*

So, do you have anything else that you want to say about your career as a final denouement?

### Final Evaluation of Career in USIA

TAYLOR: Well, only to say that it was work that I never expected in the whole wide world to get into. I fell into it through a series of progressive but unconscious decisions and acts. I never expected to have a career. I thought, like most young women of my age, that I

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would marry and settle down and have children. And, I must say that I look back on the whole experience as having been one of great satisfaction and interest. Challenging yes, but absolutely fascinating and ultimately one that I really would recommend to both men and women.

I have had a wonderful opportunity to become familiar with the world and its people and to achieve to a degree a greater understanding of the world and its people. Increasingly this becomes important in international trade and commerce. The interdependency of the world now with these tremendous ecological problems that face us make international cooperation more important than it ever has been. To feel that you're contributing even in a very minor way to that very important series of issues is of tremendous gratification.

*Q: Thank you very much, Margaret. I appreciate your giving us this time. It has been a very interesting interview. As I said, I will send you the transcript and you can edit it as you please.*

Thank you again.

End of interview